Discussion Questions  (Due: Sept 13, 18, 20, 25)

The discussion topics covered during the first few weeks of the semester provide a “context” for policy analysis, and helps set the stage for the remainder of the course. Discussion topics include an overview of the policy process and their participants; the types of policy analyses conducted; the political environment in which policy analysis is conducted; and the role of the policy analyst.

1) For each of these four discussion topics, you will prepare two (2) questions. Discussion questions may be of several forms including questions of clarity from the lecture, the ensuing class discussion, or the assigned readings; questions that drill down on a particular aspect of the discussion; or questions that relate to the broader subject of policy analysis.

2) Accompanying each question will be short statement (a few sentences to a paragraph) explaining the rationale for your question.

3) Each of the four discussion question sets are due the class period following the conclusion of the discussion topic and are worth 25 points each. (100 points total)

Written Exercises  (Due: Oct 2, 4, 9, 25)

The final project due at the completion of this course is a policy analysis report on a subject of your choosing. A series of four brief written exercises will be used to help you identify and begin preparing your policy analysis report. They are:

Exercise 1: Analysis Topic and Problem Definition (50 points)
This exercise will help you define the topic (i.e., policy issue) of your policy analysis report. You will prepare a short (3 double-spaced pages maximum) feasibility assessment about the topic you wish to explore in a policy analysis context. A feasibility assessment is a formal way of describing and exploring a problem in sufficient depth such that both you and the instructors feel confident an analysis of your topic can be successfully carried out. Your assessment must contain the following:

1) Single-sentence description of the policy problem;
2) Problem background information (how and why this is an important policy issue);
3) Affected groups or institutions (respective roles and positions of stakeholders); and
4) Information availability and adequacy (does sufficient data exist to carry out an analysis).

Exercise 2: Evaluation Criteria (75 points)
This exercise will assist you in identifying how to evaluate your selected topic. You will prepare a short (3 double-spaced pages maximum) evaluative assessment that contains the following parts:

1) Description of specific outcomes to be measured;
2) Select three (3) of the following criteria you consider to be important metrics for evaluating your topic: technical feasibility, financial/economic efficiency, effectiveness, ecological integrity, equity, political viability, and administrative operability; and
3) Identify two (2) possible metrics for each evaluation criteria that you believe will provide an objective and relevant assessment of the policy issue.
Exercise 3: Policy Alternatives (75 points)
This exercise will help you explore possible solutions to your policy issue. You will prepare a short (4 double-spaced pages maximum) alternatives assessment that describes four (4) possible alternatives that could be used to evaluate the policy issue. Your assessment must:

1) Explain how each alternative can be viewed with respect to each of three (3) characteristics selected from the 11 characteristics of good alternatives listed on p. 230, Patton & Sawicki.
2) Describe how each alternative addresses the problem as defined in Exercises 1 and 2.

Exercise 4: Data Sources and Analysis (100 points)
This exercise will help you identify and assess potential data sources and methods of analyzing your policy topic. You will prepare a short (5 double-spaced pages maximum) report that:

1) Describes three (3) potential types of data needed to conduct your analysis. For each type, describe the source(s) from which you could collect data necessary to complete your policy analysis report. Describe how the data could be accessed and the form the data is in, spatial and temporal attributes of the data, and the feasibility of using this data in your analysis.
2) Describes three (3) potential analytic methods you might use to analyze your policy issue and the pros and cons of using each method (two pros, two cons for each method).

Policy Analysis Presentation (Due: Nov 27, 29, Dec 4 or 6)
You will present a short (15 minutes maximum) overview of your policy analysis findings including the problem definition, alternatives analyzed and key recommendations. Following your presentation, you will answer questions for about 10 minutes to clarify findings, etc. (100 points)

Student Analysis Critiques (Due: Nov 29, Dec 4, 6, 11)
You will critique the policy analyses conducted by other students. These critiques will be written and, after they are graded by the instructors, forwarded to the student who conducted the policy analysis for their use in completing the policy analysis report. Each critique will consist of:

1) Two (2) questions of clarity on a specific aspect of the analysis as presented (e.g., data sources used, methods, evaluation criteria, conclusions, or recommendations); and
2) Two (2) suggestions for improving the policy analysis report. Critiques are due the class period following the day the policy analysis presentation was made. NOTE: You are not required to prepare critiques on the day of your policy analysis presentation. (100 points total)

Policy Analysis Report Outline (Due: Dec 11)
The final project due in this course is the policy analysis report. Your report will use information from Exercises 1 through 4 and incorporate feedback from the instructors and students. The written policy analysis report is to be 3,000 words maximum. Required content includes the following:

I. Title Page
II. Abstract (250 words maximum)  
III. Problem Description
   a. Social context
   b. Policy context and policy goals
   c. Complimentary and competing policies
   d. Participants and their roles and perspectives
   IV. Data, Methods, and Evaluation Criteria
   V. Analysis
   VI. Recommendations
   VII. Conclusions
   VIII. Literature Cited

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